Records indicate the East Main Street Bridge over Allen Creek was constructed in 1930 and widened in 1960. Present deterioration of the bridge girders and deck is driving the need to reconstruct the bridge rather than replacing the deck only.

The city started planning for the reconstruction of the bridge following a routine inspection in December 2002. With the filing of a Concept Definition Report in late 2005, the city began the formal planning and scheduling of the project with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). Reconstruction of the East Main Street Bridge had been expected last summer but was delayed until this year.

Delay

To provide an adequate foundation for the bridge, abutments need to be constructed. The project design calls for these to be placed immediately outside the existing wing-wall abutment. And this widening necessitates the city's acquisition of property from adjacent land owners.

This is all typical for bridge or highway construction projects, but a couple of absentee property interest delayed the property acquisition. And this resulted in a delay to letting the project for bids. And, of course, it also meant a delay in the construction schedule itself. Weight restrictions have been placed on the bridge for the past year.

Watermain

Despite the delay, preliminary work has occurred and the project is advancing. AT&T and WE Energy have already relocated utilities from the bridge. And Evansville Water & Light has bid out the relocation of a watermain. The watermain project has been awarded to R.T. Fox Contractors of Edgerton. Fox has done lots of work in Evansville before including work on East Main Street, Lincoln Street, and several privately developed subdivisions.

Due to the nature of the reconstruction, the watermain project will need to be sequenced and coordinated with the larger bridge project. Fox will have a two week window during which to install the watermain. With excavations needed on both the sending and receiving ends of the boring project, there will be some huge holes in the ground.

The project will involve percussion driving of the steel casing under the bed of Allen Creek. This method will minimize risks associated with groundwater, water from the creek, and any foundation material from the existing bridge. Soil migration could result in water and sand entering the boring, voids on top of the casing, or even collapse of the creek bed into the boring and excavation. The possibility of soil migration ruled out the traditional method of auger boring.

With the percussion driving method, the casing will remain full of soil until across the creek and then be cleaned out and the watermain pulled through. The same method was used to bore under Highway 14 and County Road M when the Piggly Wiggly was constructed.

Bridge Construction
Where the utility related costs are entirely the responsibility of the city, the expense of the bridge project will be split under a state/municipal agreement. Design engineering and land acquisition expenses have been borne by the city. Construction costs, including construction engineering, are divided eighty percent WisDOT and twenty percent Evansville. The city's share is about $150,000 and will be financed with a State Trust Fund Loan to be repaid by proceeds of Tax Increment District #5.

WisDOT is the lead for the bridge project itself. They let the project for bids earlier this spring. Concrete Structures of Janesville was the low bidder. Concrete Structures has extensive experience with small bridges such as this project.

A preconstruction meeting will be held in early or mid June; then we will know the detailed plans for how Concrete Structures intends to proceed. But we do know the general timeline, sequencing, and work involved in the project.

Three of the four wing walls will be replaced. The one on the northeast corner will remain because it is in good physical condition and has the right alignment, so the project was designed around it. The clear opening will be made slightly wider to increase the capacity of water flow. The height will stay the same, as matching the road alignment determines the vertical measurement.

Construction will start shortly after the Fourth of July holiday and be completed in late September. The first step will be removal of the bridge. I-beam pilings will be driven some thirty feet to bedrock. Since the pilings will be fairly closely spaced, the next step will be the two week time frame for R.T. Fox to install the watermain under the creek.

Then the three new abutment wing walls can be poured. Next, the new bridge deck and support structure will be built. And, finally, the sidewalls and pavement repairs can be done.

Aesthetics were part of the bridge design. The new wing walls will have stamped concrete to duplicate the cut stone pattern of the one being kept. The sidewalls will have pilasters and openings to complement the historic nature of the downtown. When Main Street was built a few years ago, we purchased additional historic appearance lightpoles which will be installed on the corners of the bridge.

Open for Business
Early on, there had been some serious consideration of constructing the bridge one half at a time in order to keep one-way access during construction. However, the design of the bridge would not permit keeping half of it place.

Luckily, it is a pretty short detour of South Union (formerly Exchange) Street to Water Street and its bridge to Madison Street. Or, you could come up Maple Street and see the new Creekside Place Community/Senior Center.

We recognize that removing the bridge will disrupt traffic and be tough for downtown businesses. At minimum, there will be some extra signage indicating that downtown businesses are open and accessible.

And there may be some additional marketing or outreach. The Economic Development Committee and Chamber of Commerce are organizing a business meeting to discuss options for additional advertising and promotion.